

Stages and Arizona AIMS for Special Education

OVERVIEW

Stages includes two major software components: (a) informal assessment software and (b) curriculum software. Stages informal assessment software is instructional in nature, providing activities with constructive feedback and opportunities for the learner to explore and choose. Stages curriculum software is a collection of interactive daily instructional programs appropriate for learners at each Stage.

Stages software enhances Arizona's assessment for learners with special needs because:

1. **Stages aligns with Arizona's Content Standards for Foundations (Grade 3) Level Mathematics, Reading, and Writing.**
2. **Stages provides a way to document learner progress prior to assessment.**
3. **Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**
4. **Stages can help instructors determine the type of Community-Based Instruction schedule that is appropriate for a learner with significant disabilities.**

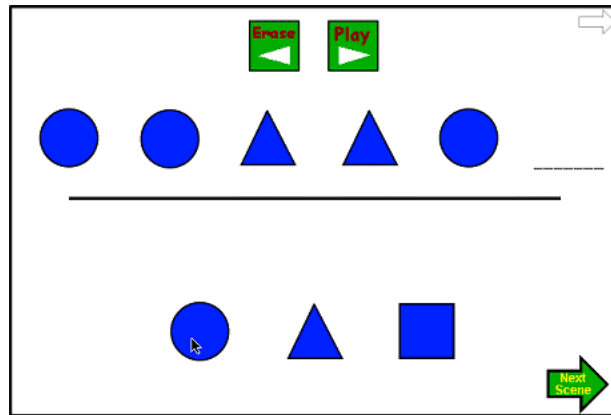
1. Stages aligns with Arizona's Content Standards for Foundations (Grade 3) Level Mathematics, Reading, and Writing.

Stages ensures meaningful and effective access to general curriculum areas for learners preparing for AIMS in Mathematics, Reading, or Writing. Stages content aligns with the state academic standards at Grade 3 in these content areas, plus community skills such as identification of street signs. The instructor can also use the information from activity reports to determine whether the learner is eligible for alternate assessment (AIMS-A). Please refer to the section entitled "How Stages Correlates with Arizona Content Standards" for detailed matching between Stages informal assessment software and specific curriculum standards. Also, the section entitled "Stages and Alternate Assessment Eligibility Criteria" shows how the activities match up with items in each content area.

2. Stages provides a way to document learner progress prior to assessment.

Over time, using Stages will provide evidence that the instructional team needs to build a complete picture of the learner's skill achievement. Observation guidelines and forms in the Stages kits help the instructional team make the most out of an activity session. The data-gathering features of the software enable the observer to focus on noting the learner's behavior and thinking-out-loud responses. Two adults from the instructional team can work together: one adult can encourage the learner and the other can note valuable data about behaviors on the Data Sheet without being noticed by the learner.

Alternatively if a video or still camera is available, it may be directed at the learner and the computer monitor to discreetly record interactions and other behaviors while one adult coaches. During the sessions, the learner will be less conscious of her performance being recorded, making her responses more candid. While the learner is doing the Stages software activities, the instructor can print directly from any screen to capture a learner-generated product (see example on next page).



Example screen shot from Stage Four: Create Patterns

At the end of each activity, a report with instructional data about the time spent, choices made, response accuracy or work product, input method, prompt type, and time/date stamp are displayed with the learner's name. The instructor may wish to then print that screen or save the information as a text-format electronic file. The collected information is appropriate to use in the Activity-Based Performance Assessment for students preparing for AIMS-A, either to fill in the Data Sheet, or to include as part of the learner's supporting portfolio.

The feedback in Stages activities is encouraging and rewarding, providing a relaxed setting for exploring topics and demonstrating skills with minimal supervision. Many Stages activities include accessible choice-making opportunities. Functional skills activities include various community settings.

3. Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology.

An objective of Stages software is to provide several options for input methods and other settings so that the learner's instructor, parents, and others in the IEP team can determine his ideal learning and communication environment. Different devices, auditory feedback, speeds and prompts are among the factors in providing the appropriate accommodations for a learner.

4. Stages can help instructors determine the type of Community-Based Instruction schedule that is appropriate for a learner with significant disabilities.

Information from Stages reports can give the instructor an indication of the learner's skills in identifying pictures, symbols, colors, shapes, numbers, letters, words, money and street signs. The instructor can observe whether the learner can read and follow written or spoken directions. The amount of required prompting and learner time on task can also help determine what type of Community-Based Instruction should be considered. Stages activities and curriculum software promote learner independence by aiding in preparation for daily living.

SUMMARY

Stages augments the Arizona assessment cycle for learners at various levels of special education programs. Instructors and IEP teams can use Stages software as a comprehensive benchmark tool to assist the instructional team in collecting valuable information on learner skill achievement, determine assessment strategy, and discover the learner's abilities, needs and thinking approach.

How Stages Correlates with Arizona Content Standards¹

Key to Performance Levels
(A) = Approaches the Standard
(M) = Meets the Standard
(E) = Exceeds the Standard

Mathematics Foundations (Grade 3) Specific Foundations (Performance Levels in Bold)

Number Sense

Students know and are able to do the following:

- (A) Demonstrate proficiency with basic multiplication and division facts.
- (M) Demonstrate with models to show the process used in addition.
- (M) Identify fractional parts of a whole using models.
- (M) Able to identify relevant information to solve simple word problems.

Related Stages Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Math Facts (+, -, x, ÷), Word Problems (+, -, x, ÷), Fractions
Math Facts includes addition and subtraction questions with and without regrouping. Word Problems includes problems with and without on-screen manipulatives to aid the learner. Fractions problems include illustrations of common items such as pizza and groups of animals.

Data Analysis, Statistics, and Probability

Students know and are able to do the following:

- (E) [Construct,] read, interpret displays of data.
- (E) Draw conclusions from graphed data.

Related Stages Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Charts and Graphs
Activity questions refer to relative amounts as well as quantities represented by the charts and graphs.

Patterns, Algebra and Functions

Students know and are able to do the following:

- (E) Describe and extend patterns using numbers and designs.

(Geometry)

- (A) Match objects of same size and shape.

Related Stages Activities:

Stage Four: Explore Patterns, Continue/Fill-In Patterns, Create Patterns
These activities introduce the learner to simple linear patterns using shapes, color, and sound.

¹Information found in the Arizona Academic Standards and Accountability Performance Level Descriptors for Foundations (Grade 3) level. Adopted by the state Board of Education, August 1, 2000.

Source: <http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/AIMS/Administering/Default.asp>. Accessed May 15, 2002.

Geometry

Students know and are able to do the following:

- (M) Use a rectangular array to represent a multiplication fact.
- (M) Identify, [draw] and name simple 2-dimensional figures.

Related Stages Activities:

Stage Four: Shape ID

Stage Five: Math: Word Problems (+, -, x, ÷)

In Stage Four, the learner identifies shapes in isolation, drawings and in photographs of real-life scenes. Picture arrays help the learner to solve multiplication problems in Stage Five.

Measurement and Discrete Mathematics

Students know and are able to do the following:

- (A) Begin to make simple calculations using various types of measurements, including money.

Related Stages Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Geometry

Stage Six: Counting Money, Money Equivalents

The learner calculates area, perimeter, and volume in Stage Five with the aid of on-screen diagrams.

Counting Money includes real-life scenarios taken from the other Stage Six activities.

Mathematical Structure and Logic

Students know and are able to do the following:

- (A) Draw simple conclusions using logical reasoning.

Related Stages Activities:

Stage Five: Problem Solving: Number Guess, Mystery Shape, Mystery Person

In *Number Guess*, the learner deduces a number chosen at random by the computer from a selected range of numbers (various levels of difficulty, including option for custom range). The *Mystery Shape* and *Mystery Person* activities also assess the learner's deductive reasoning skills based on object attributes such as color.

Reading Foundations (Grade 3)

Specific Foundations (Performance Levels in Bold)

Use phonetic skills to decode words

Students know and are able to do the following:

- (A) Identify beginning, middle and ending sound/letter relationships.

Related Stages Activities:

Stage Five: *Reading:* Sounds (Rhyming)

Stage Five *Sounds* introduces the learner to rhyming pairs. Using a word wall, the learner identifies the rhyming pairs.

Use word recognition and decoding strategies

Students know and are able to do the following:

- (A) Identify simple words using phonetic, context and picture clues.
- (M) Use context clues to derive meaning of an unfamiliar word.

Related Stages Activities:

Stage Five: *Reading:* Sounds, Meaning, Context

Multisensory presentation of words in scenes and stories help the learner decode word meanings in these activities.

Apply comprehension strategies

Students know and are able to do the following:

- (A) Restate information from a reading selection.

Related Stages Activities:

Stage Seven: Making Stories

Making Stories is an accessible way for a learner to independently produce written expression in response to a reading selection or any other writing task.

Writing Foundations (Grade 3)

Specific Foundations (Performance Levels in Bold)

Use the writing process to effectively complete a variety of writing tasks

Students know and are able to do the following:

- (A) Use simple sentence structure.
- (A) Edit for most beginning capitalization and end punctuation.
- (M) Correctly use a variety of words.
- (M) Use mostly simple sentences but occasionally include more complex sentences.
- (M) Edit adequately (punctuation, capitalization and spelling) for readability.

Related Stages Activities:

Stage Seven: *Making Sentences:* Building Sentences, Spelling and Grammar, Writing Sentences
Making Stories

Building Sentences provides the learner with an input device-accessible word wall at three levels of difficulty. *Spelling and Grammar* activities present the learner with sentences to edit for spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and other proofreading skills. Customizability of *Spelling and Grammar* and *Writing Sentences* allows the instructor to create lists of words or sentences and save them for later use with other learners.

Use correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and usage

Students know and are able to do the following:

- (A) Recognize that sentence beginnings and proper nouns require capital letters.
- (A) Identify regular plurals.
- (M) Apply capitalization rules for proper nouns and sentences beginnings in simple sentences.
- (M) Recognize appropriate verb tense.
- (M) Punctuate endings of sentences.

Related Stages Activities:

Stage Seven: *Making Sentences:* Spelling and Grammar
Spelling and Grammar in Stage Seven also provides activities for homonyms, noun-verb agreement, and word order.

Stages and Alternate Assessment Eligibility Criteria²

Stages also correlates with items in each content area of the eligibility criteria for alternate assessment (AIMS-A). The IEP team can use the information from Stages activity reports to help complete Form 1.

Reading	Related Stages Activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Read the alphabet	Stage Four: Reading Readiness - Letter ID Learner must identifies letters at random when prompted (spoken).
<input type="checkbox"/> Decode one-syllable words.	Stage Five: Reading - Meaning The learner identifies the picture that corresponds to a word (spoken, text-only, or both).
<input type="checkbox"/> Retell stories in sequence using [gestures, pictures,] written/oral words, i.e., beginning, middle, end.	Stage Seven: Making Stories This provides an accessible means for written expression with text-to-speech capability.
Writing	Related Stages Activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Write one-syllable words without a model.	Stage Seven: Copy Words A word is spoken and the learner must type the correct spelling.
<input type="checkbox"/> Write numerals 0-12 without a model.	Stage Seven: Copy Words Learner types numeral when prompted (spoken, no text shown).
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a story or message with at least one concept by drawing, telling, and/or emergent writing.	Stage Seven: Making Stories The learner can import a picture as a topic for written expression.
Mathematics	Related Stages Activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Count out requested number of objects up to 10.	Stage Four: Math Readiness - Counting Learner selects correct number from number line when prompted (spoken, written, or both).
<input type="checkbox"/> Match coins to purchase an item using a coin cue card.	Stage Six: Money Names Learner selects correct picture of coins or bills when prompted (spoken, written, or both).
<input type="checkbox"/> Sort objects by shape, size, color, and length.	Stage Four: Shape ID, Color ID These activities prepares the learner for this item. Stage Five: Problem Solving - Mystery Shape The learner deduces correct shape based on criteria such as color and number of sides. Stage Five: Math - Geometry The learner calculates perimeter of shapes.
<input type="checkbox"/> Tell time to the hour.	Stage Six: Telling Time Learner selects correct time on digital and analog clocks.
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify coin/dollar equivalent.	Stage Six: Money Equivalents, Counting Money Learner identifies/counts coins and bills from one cent to twenty dollars.

²Information found in the Alternate Assessment Manual for the Arizona Student Achievement Program (January 2002). Source: <http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/AIMS/Administering/Default.asp>. Accessed May 15, 2002.